



MEDIA RELEASE

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VCAT Backs Hepburn Community Wind

The Hepburn Shire is set to have Australia's first community owned wind farm. VCAT has upheld the Hepburn Shire Council's February decision to grant a planning permit for the Hepburn Community Wind Park.

The wind farm, to be situated on Leonards Hill approximately 10 km south of Daylesford, will consist of two turbines each with a capacity of 2 megawatts. The wind farm will produce enough energy for up to 2,500 homes, roughly half the number of homes across the Hepburn Shire.

The community wind farm is the joint effort of the local Hepburn Renewable Energy Association, HREA, and the Melbourne based renewable energy company, Future Energy Pty Ltd.

HREA President, Per Bernard, was very happy with the decision. "We'd like to thank each one of our 430 members for their wisdom, vision and the magnificent support they've shown," said Mr Bernard.

He also thanked Future Energy. "It's clear from the VCAT decision that Future Energy prepared a very professional application. It gives us a lot of confidence that we can continue working together to complete this great community project," he said

When asked about the opinions of objectors Mr Bernard said, "VCAT was just the planning process. We're absolutely committed to continue talking openly with everyone in the community throughout the whole process."

Future Energy's Managing Director, David Shapero, also thanked the community. "This decision is a vindication of this community's commitment to making a local difference on climate change."

The group recently established the Hepburn Community Wind Park Co-operative Ltd which will eventually own the wind farm. A nine person board of directors were elected and will now work with Future Energy to guide the project through to completion. The inaugural Chairperson, Simon Holmes à Court, is enthusiastic about his involvement. "I congratulate everyone who has helped get us this far. This is a wonderful project which will allow people to have a direct ownership of local renewable energy and share in the benefits."

David Shapero said, "This is a magnificent milestone but there's a lot of work still to be done before the fund raising process can start. Obviously the government funding is a good start." Last year Sustainability Victoria agreed to provide funding of \$975,000 towards the wind farm.

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The community ownership concept is modelled on the success of similar wind farms across Europe and, more recently, the USA. The original concept dates back to the 1980s in Denmark. That country now produces over 20% of their energy needs from wind power with over half of all wind turbines owned by local wind co-operatives.

Community Wind Farm Reference: www.windpower.org/en/core.htm

For more information visit www.hrea.org.au

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